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Toward a Kairos of Library Instruction

Contemporary group instruction in libraries is organized by and around the Association of College and Research Libraries' Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (the Standards). This set of performance indicators and measurable outcomes, first adopted in 2000 and currently under revision, structures the way information literacy programs are organized, delivered, and assessed in American colleges and universities. The Standards have productively enabled librarians to define for themselves a teaching location within the academy: librarians define and take pedagogical responsibility for information literacy learning outcomes and their assessment.

While the Standards have animated much of the literature, organization, and practice of information literacy instruction, they have also generated significant critique. As John Buschman (2010) has usefully pointed out, opposition to the Standards has formed “a significant portion of the theoretical ‘voice’ of IL thinking” (96); the discourse of information literacy includes, like any articulation of an ideology, significant resistance to dominant modes of thought and practice. Much of this critique has focused on the ways that the Standards function as what Christine Pawley (2003) has called a “Procrustean paradigm,” forcing the varied forms of information production, seeking, and use into an atomized set of mechanistic requirements disconnected from the concrete practice of particular students producing, seeking, and using particular information in everyday academic life. Such a paradigm fixes in place definitions of the terms *information* and *literacy* (Seale, 2010), thereby reifying hierarchies of knowledge production (Elmborg, 2006).

These critiques are primarily concerned with the fixity of the Standards. Because Standards are abstract and posited as universal, they fail to account for the local and contextual

nature of teaching and learning. While the Standards productively organize instruction practice, they do so along an axis of external outcomes. The librarian's translation of abstract, global learning outcomes to concrete local practice, even when highly attuned and customized, necessarily begins outside of the classroom. Anticipated outcomes are either defined in alliance with or in opposition to the Standards, preceding an evaluation of the information needs of a particular group of students, students whose needs are understood through the lens of external, standards-based heuristic. This is even more the case when the Standards align with what Lisa Sloniowski (2013) has called the "audit culture" of assessment and accreditation. When resources flow to departments and individuals who can demonstrate proof that globally defined learning outcomes are being locally met, the pressure to teach and assess to the Standard rather than the student becomes even stronger.

Critiques of the Standards promise to give teaching librarians theoretical models and practical suggestions for resisting the strictures of abstract and globally-defined learning outcomes. Maria T. Accardi (2013) has usefully framed a feminist approach to information literacy instruction that centers an ethic of care. Others have offered alternative teaching and learning models grounded in learning theory (Dunaway, 2011) and critical reflective practice (Jacobs, 2008; Booth, 2011). Maura Seale (2010) and Andrea Baer (2013) have suggested emphasizing knowledge construction in the classroom as strategy for undoing notions of the student as an information consumer.

These critiques and others have shaped mainstream thinking about teaching in libraries, evidenced in part by the ways the proposed Framework subsumes much of their substance, particularly in its emphasis on students as "content creators" (Gibson & Jacobson, 2014, p. 250) and information literacy as institutional guidelines as less prescriptive than spurs to dialogue

within institutions (Gibson & Jacobson, 2014, p. 251). However, the interventions have done little to offer an analytic alternative to generating external, abstracted, and globally defined standard approaches to information literacy instruction. Even if critics of the Standards find the new framework to be “better” and “more correct” than the 2000 document, the revision process and document it produces will still represent an ideological statement that orients the attention of teaching librarians outward rather than inward. The revised ACRL framework will give the field a new global perspective that must be translated locally. The problem of the Procrustean bed will continue, even if the bed is more comfortable for some of us.

What is missing from both the critiques of standards-based teaching in libraries and the professional response to those critiques is a way of conceptualizing information literacy that shifts focus away from re-making the bed. Librarians need an alternative for framing both information literacy practice and critique that is not dependent on engagement with global standards and frameworks. Drawing on the literature of composition and rhetoric, librarians might productively reorient their work toward local and immediate contexts using the idea of *kairos*, or qualitative time. *Kairos* demands apprehension of the moment, and calls for action that appropriate to that moment. A theoretical concept of time originating with the ancient Greeks, contemporary composition theorists and practitioners have used *kairos* to trouble the stability of both the content of the classroom and the teaching methods deployed. *Kairos* shifts the object of analysis away from abstract standards and toward a local, material capacity to discern content and pedagogy in a given classroom situation. *Kairos* is an heuristic of the present, offering an analytic alibi for sidestepping debates about standards altogether, shifting attention away from the construction of the Procrustean bed and toward the students too often stretched to fit inside it.

KAIROS AND STANDARD TIME

Kairos is fundamentally an argument against timelessness. In its origins, the concept was used to give shape to the present as always already embedded in a context, produced by social and political forces and demanding responsive and proportional action in order to effect change: the present does not exist outside of the conditions that precede it. For the ancient Greeks, *kairos* offered a way of understanding the *when* and the *how* of human intervention in the world, and the changes such intervention could produce.

While definitions of *kairos* can be difficult to fix in linguistic place, perhaps a suitable condition for a term that embraces the momentary and our responses to it, the concept is fundamentally material. For the ancients, *kairos* had two concrete, if related, meanings: *kairos* referred to the “long, tunnel-like aperture through which the archer’s arrow has to pass,” and *kairos* was the moment “when the weaver must draw the yarn through a gap that momentarily opens in the warp of the cloth being woven” (White, 1987, p.13). In both cases, *kairos* referred to the critical time in which a change must be made—an arrow shot, or a piece of cloth woven. Homer's *Iliad* provides defines *kairos* as "the lethal or critical point for the body to receive a wound" (Wilson, 1980, p. 180). The kairic part of the body required special protections, like Achilles' heel, to keep the vulnerable point relatively safe from harm.

Such material meanings persist as the sense of *kairos* shifts more narrowly to an understanding of time and timeliness. Often understood as an abstraction, *kairos* frames time as a material force, one which determines the actions that take place during and within it. John E. Smith (2002) contrasts kairic time with *chronos* as a way of understanding qualitative time as enmeshed in the world. *Chronos* refers to "the uniform time of the cosmic system," the kind of time that marks "the quantity of duration, the length of periodicity, the age of an object or artifact, and the rate of acceleration of bodies" (p. 47). *Chronos* is time in terms of numbers and

subordinate conjunctions—e.g., ten minutes, before or after, four years old, twelve miles an hour—socially constructed and accepted as the markers of the passage of time. *Chronos* allows us to mark human history, rendering time abstract and at a remove that allows us to account for it in a way that everyone can understand. *Kairos*, on the other hand, refers to time linked to the occasion, the opportunity, and the action. It is the qualitative aspect of time, or time married to measure. Ecclesiastes 3:2 (Revised Standard Version) is an example of kairic time: while there is the chronological time when a person is born (e.g., June 16, 1975), there is also the kairic "time to be born, and a time to die," as well as "a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted." Kairos measures both time and its context, allowing us to understand the present as sociohistorically informed.

As a heuristic, kairos allows us to apprehend structures that appear as timeless and eternal as constructed in and through the materiality of time. This is the sense of kairos that animated the Sophists in their understanding of the nature of truth, a position that contrasted with that of Plato. For Plato, kairos mandated that the teacher, in possession of an eternal truth, account for the quality of the present for the student—what he knew, needed to know, and was capable of knowing—when developing a pedagogy to lead the student to abstract, idealized truth (Kinneavy, 2002). For the Sophists, in contrast, kairos applied even to the truth itself: what it was possible to conceive as truth was determined by the moment in which truth was defined. In Sophist thinking, nothing escaped the critical context of timeliness, not even the Platonic ideal.

THE KAIROS OF STANDARDS

Kairos, then, demands that we understand all truth claims as embedded in a context, and all actions as measured responses to that context. As an analytic frame, kairos destabilizes apparently solid accretions like the Standards—and the continuing demand that we revise

them—as something other than natural and eternal. In the field of information literacy, the demand to generate collectively defined and globally shared concepts of information literacy and the information literate has become a natural and necessary project for the profession.

Understood through the lens of kairos, this demand can be seen as a response to socioeconomic contexts, a demand we might usefully resist. Understanding the kairos of the Standards disrupts the sense of both the Standards and the demand for their revision as necessary and natural parts of the work that librarians do.

Apprehending the kairos of the current Standards provides a useful example of the ways linking time and action can de-naturalize accepted norms of professional discourse and practice. It is difficult to imagine academic library instruction services without the competency Standards and everything that has come after. Since their publication in 2000, ACRL units have developed discipline-specific standards for science and technology (2006) and anthropology and sociology (2007). The organization has established an Institute for Information Literacy that, since 1999, has conducted an immersive information literacy teacher-training program for more than 1300 librarians (ACRL History, 2010). Information literacy is institutionally embedded via a host of committees and subcommittees across the various units, divisions, and roundtables of ACRL and ALA, and through ACRL's Library Instruction Roundtable and Information Literacy Coordinating Committee.

As pervasive as information literacy has become, the concept only entered the discourse in 1974, when Paul Zurkowski, then-president of the Information Industry Association, introduced librarians to the concept of information literacy. In a talk he gave to library professionals, Zurkowski defined the present as one in which “an overabundance of information” that “exceeds our capacity to evaluate it” has become “a universal condition” (p. 4). For

Zurkowski, this was the *kairos* in which librarians and teachers, patrons and students, lived. Such a *kairos* demanded the production of “information literates,” or “people trained in the application of information resources to their work” (p. 9). For Zurkowski, the problem of information was an economic one; businesses required workers who could sort and sift through ever-expanding information sources in order to rationally drive economic decisions. While his report includes discussions of liberal ideas like importance of free expression and the transformation of information into knowledge, Zurkowski was primarily interested in the economic impact of the changing information environment. His report prioritizes the need to create knowledge workers: “The top priority of the Commission should be directed toward establishing a major national program to achieve universal information literacy by 1984” (p. 30).

Arguing that Western economies were rapidly transitioning into information economies, Zurkowski defined information literacy as a job skill, pointing to the ostensible need for trained workers able to search for, retrieve, and evaluate information in a professional context. Information literacy was defined as a discrete set of skills that a student could obtain much like any other consumer good in the higher education setting and then transport to a job in this new economic world. In the decades that followed, of course, the growth of jobs related to “information” was primarily in low-skilled digital labor that arguably never required the range of information literacy competencies that the profession would go on to describe.

Zurkowski’s sense of the present as mechanistic, and his linking of higher education to employment, meshed well with emergent discourses in education more generally. The most direct early articulation of this *kairos* from a higher education body was *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 report on the status of teaching and learning in the United States commissioned by T. H. Bell, then Secretary of Education in 1981. The report sought to “define the problems afflicting

American education and to provide solutions” (p. 2), and the epigraph suggests that both problems and solutions would be addressed from the perspective of their link to employment:

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgement needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (p. 9)

While the epigraph appeals to traditional notions of a liberal arts education, those values are directed firstly and explicitly to employment. Indeed, this link is made repeatedly in the report. For example, a list of educational challenges that included high rates of functional illiteracy and poor critical thinking skills is followed by a statement of the impact of these problems: “These deficiencies come at a time when the demand for highly skilled workers in new fields is accelerating rapidly” (p. 9). Again and again, the need to improve education is tied directly to job outcomes.

If the kairos that produced and was produced by *A Nation at Risk* linked education tightly to jobs, the kairos of those jobs was the impending information economy, one in which students must be trained to work with *information*:

Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all--old and young alike,

affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering. (p. 10)

For librarians, such a context would seem to require librarians to be at the center of the educational project. As the workers in higher education responsible for buying and making accessible information, librarians should be key players in the proposed changes to education called for by *A Nation at Risk*. And yet, only two librarians (Patricia Brevik and Artemis Kirk) were involved with the production of the report. The appointed membership of the Commission included high school principals, college and university professors, school superintendents, former governors, Board of Education members, and high-ranking university administrators. The two librarians merely gave testimony in support of the report. Even libraries themselves are only briefly mentioned, once in a list of sites for lifelong learning that included home, work, museums, and science centers, and once as a tour site for participants in the commission's work. Despite its emphasis on what academic librarians saw as their domain, *A Nation at Risk* largely obscured their role.

Librarians responded to this kairos—one in which information skills were sought by employers and noted as critical by higher education governing bodies, all while librarians were absent or adjunct to these discussions—by developing a richer definition of information literacy, one that cast themselves as the workers responsible for the production of an information literate workforce. In 1987, the American Library Association established a Presidential Commission on Information Literacy. This Commission was the first step toward establishing a practical apparatus that would enable libraries to use Zurkowski's concept of "information literacy" as the warrant for their inclusion in conversations about the future of higher education. For ALA and the commissioners, the decision to take up information literacy as an object of analysis was

partly “a response to being omitted from the dialog on educational reform in the early 1980s” (O’Connor, p. 79). The kairos of increasing emphasis on the links between higher education and employment as well as a shift toward an information economy produced a context in which a move toward information literacy made sense, both as a way to embed librarians in conversations about educational reform and to define a role for themselves in academic institutions. In fact, their exclusion from these conversations was explicitly mentioned in the Commission’s Final Report as a reason the librarians developed the concept:

Although libraries historically have provided a meaningful structure for relating information in ways that facilitate the development of knowledge, they have been all but ignored in the literature about the information society. Even national education reform reports, starting with *A Nation at Risk* (7) in 1983, largely exclude libraries. No K-12 report has explored the potential role of libraries or the need for information literacy. In the higher education reform literature, Education Commission of the States President Frank Newman's 1985 report, "Higher Education and the American Resurgence"(8), only addresses the instructional potential of libraries in passing, but it does raise the concern for the accessibility of materials within the knowledge explosion. In fact, no reform report until "College"(9), the 1986 Carnegie Foundation Report, gave substantive consideration to the role of libraries in addressing the challenges facing higher education.” (para 20)

The Final Report constituted a significant step toward joining the national conversation about education reform, arguing that librarians were more vital than ever in the face of a coming “information society” that would fundamentally change the labor market and higher education itself. In taking up information literacy as a pedagogical domain, librarians were “tying libraries

and librarians directly to the educational mandates of the reform movement (and thus to funding)...critical to the survival of school and academic libraries” (O’Connor, p. 80).

The *kairos* of information literacy, then, was fundamentally concerned with work. Students required information literacy skills so that they would be prepared to work in an information society; librarians required information literacy as a concept so that their work would be recognized in conversations about teaching and learning in higher education. This was the corporatizing higher education *kairos*—colleges and universities should be run like businesses in order to produce laborers for business—in which librarians defined for themselves and the profession a role in as necessary employees in the workforce development program for a coming information economy. In order to define their role, then, librarians needed to define two things: the information literate student, an abstracted, context-less future worker who would be produced through the labor of teaching librarians, as well as a set of learning outcomes that the teaching librarian could claim as her own domain. The Standards comprise the functional, measurable learning outcomes that organize the identity of the student and the work practice of the librarian.

The intervention of librarians into the *kairos* of higher education altered that *kairos*. Initially the domain of the academic librarians who took up its definition and extension, information literacy became a central learning outcome for accreditation bodies, particularly the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In its 2003 “Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum,” the Commission notes that “the principles underlying information literacy are as old as higher education itself” and that the concept “has increasing value as a way to cope with the challenges of the ‘Information Age’” (p. 1). Citing the Information Literacy Competency Standards as a source for its discussion of information literacy, the report notes that,

“information literacy could be considered as a metaphor for the entire learning process” (p. 2). Academic librarians succeeded in bringing information literacy to a higher education audience beyond the library. While advocacy for information literacy is perhaps most notable in the MSCHE documents, all major higher education accrediting bodies, including the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools’ Commission on Colleges, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges name information literacy skills as part of their standards or outcomes (ACRL Accreditation, 2011).

The kairos of contemporary group instruction in libraries is inextricable from the mechanizing and corporatizing kairos of higher education in the 1980s. Librarians articulate their work practice in relation to the Standards, scaffolding and aligning their teaching and assessment to the Standards. Even where the Standards have been critiqued they organize information literacy instruction. As Eisenhower and Smith (2010) suggest, institutional investments in quantifying and measuring student learning “scaffold the very discourse we critique” (p. 315). The Standards have produced the actual classroom space we are given in which to teach, defined for many of us the teaching roles we play in our libraries, and given us a place at the curricular table in many institutions.

KAIROS AND THE CLASSROOM

The 2010 Standards were generated in part as a response to the broader contexts of higher education reform in the latter part of the 20th century. Once committed to paper, however, they can be seen as a discovered truth. Even as they undergo major revision, the need for shared organizing principles of some kind—a need that can be understood kairotically as a response to the continuing emphasis on the standardization of higher education more generally—has been

less questioned. As teaching librarians are asked by the revision process to form consensus around threshold concepts as a guide for teaching (Gibson and Jacobson, 2014), for example, the perceived need for that consensus is left untouched. Turning to the deployment of kairos in the composition classroom can frame ways that the heuristic of kairos might inform future discussions of teaching in libraries beyond the truth claims made by global frameworks like the Standards and their revisions.

The Sophist idea that both process and product are contextually informed has been used in composition studies to change the pedagogy of student writing. In particular, kairos has been mobilized to question the assumption that students must learn Standard English as a fixed and true language. If writing is seen as always kairotic—the language in which it is possible to speak is produced by contexts which precede it, and is therefore subject to change by action taken in the present—then teaching and learning should focus less on mastery of abstract and standardized constructions of language and more on apprehending the contexts that produce both student writing and the language of power they confront when they step into a college composition classroom.

Kairos has been used by composition scholars and teachers to shift writing instruction away from the mastery of standard grammar—and all the reinscriptions of power such projects involve—and toward the development of student writers capable of using language to intervene productively in their world. A kairotic approach recognizes language as always already under revision, never static, and sees teaching and learning the habits of writing and revision as something that happens *in time*, informed by ideology as well as capable of changing it. Kairos enables teachers to see the classroom as an eternal present, one that requires teachers to engage

students on behalf of themselves rather than the structures of standard grammar that often structure a classroom.

Critically, *kairos* also helps us understand standards of all kinds—which can come to seem natural and necessary and inevitable and true—as themselves produced contextually and in time, in response to local political, social, and economic relations. Viewed *kairotically*, the constructed nature of standards becomes visible, and the decision to use them (or not) becomes strategic. In composition studies, understanding Standard English through the heuristic of *kairos* has enabled teachers and students to interact with Standard English as a structure of power, one that must be reckoned with in the present, but that can also be resisted and changed by student writers equipped to understand the English language as always subject to change.

Kairos was resurrected by name in composition and rhetoric studies in 1986, when James L. Kinneavy delivered a talk, “*Kairos: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric*,” at the Conference on Classical Rhetoric and the Teaching of Freshman Composition. (His talk was later collected in a printed volume of essays from the field.) In this address, Kinneavy explicitly excavated the Platonic view of *kairos* to argue for a composition classroom that encouraged student writing assignments and assessment in context, or *kairos*. For example, first year students seeking pharmacy degrees would write letters to the editor of the newspaper about upcoming legislation regarding generic pricing of drugs. Such an assignment recognizes the location of students in a context with particular interest. Rather than drilling students in spelling, syntax, and grammar, a *kairotic* assignment reflects and engages the social, economic, and political location of students. Students master the rules of standard English by writing about contemporary issues that matter personally to them, emerging from grappling with materially relevant content related to the lived context of the student writers (Kinneavy, 1986, p. 239).

Kinneavy's conception of *kairos* took hold in composition and rhetoric studies where teachers sought to move away from standards-based teaching and toward teaching that engaged the context of the student. Teachers in writing centers (Glover, 2006) and composition classrooms (Johnson, Letter, & Livingston, 2009) have mobilized *kairos* for instruction, and theorists have re-articulated feedback to students as a kind of *kairotic* engagement (Harker, 2007). In all of these cases, *kairos* orients the instructor toward the material conditions of her own classroom, students, and the student texts in front of her. Standard English forms part of the context of the classroom, but students and their own location in time structures the teaching and learning as it occurs.

A second and related strand of thinking about *kairos* in these fields calls into question the stability of Standard English as a form of absolute knowledge itself. Scholars have surfaced the *kairos* of Standard English, arguing that what appears to be a natural and uncontested "correct" linguistic form is in fact contingent, just as subject to the conditions of context as the language varieties of students in a given classroom (Rickert, 2004; Harker, 2007). If the *kairos* of Standard English is left unquestioned, power accrues to those who speak and write this particular version of English while those who use other forms of English (e.g., African American Vernacular English, world Englishes) are consigned to a project of correction. A *kairos* of classroom instruction that acknowledges that defined outcomes—e.g., mastery of Standard English—emerge from contexts of power and contingency value the language of all students equitably, making good on the real promise of *kairos* as a pedagogical approach: enabling and empowering the student to develop a critical perspective on standardized learning outcomes themselves, rendering standards subject to change by the student herself.

Shifting to standards-based teaching in libraries, the critique of the Standards that weds them to contingency has been amply articulated in the critical literature. Seale (2010), Elmborg (2006), and Pawley (2003) have all suggested that the problem with Standards is in part that they fix as eternally true that which is historically, politically, and contextually informed. In other words, their critique emphasizes the importance of kairos without using the term. Collapsing these critiques into the term kairos allows the teaching librarian to move from a position of critique to a reconceptualization of the information literacy classroom that centers the problem of fixity. Kairos acknowledges the classroom as a space *created by* the development of standards in which context-based teaching can take place. Thinking through a kairotic pedagogy of information literacy instruction offers the teaching librarian a new heuristic through which to organize her teaching. The focus of instruction can then be on the particular students in a particular classroom with a particular set of learning experiences and needs, and not on the task of either teaching to a set of standardized outcomes or struggling to reform those outcomes so that they can become yet another set of standards subject to critique.

Such a change in classroom practice would privilege flexibility and sensitivity to the particular context in which instruction takes place. The knowledge that students bring into the classroom, both about the ways academic research happens as well as the ways that other kinds of knowledge formation occur would be respected and centered. A pedagogy of kairos would demand that objectives listed in the Standards as neutral be understood as subject to kairos. Kairos provides a heuristic more than it does a how-to, inviting a shift in habit of mind away from externally defined outcomes and toward deriving those outcomes from the material conditions of teaching.

Kairos enables a library instruction practice that takes a critical distance from the Information Literacy Competency Standards. Such a distance is important, especially as the Standards undergo a major revision that can't help but buttress the essential ideological power of standards-based instruction even as it responds to the critiques of the last decade. Understood through the lens of the present, the social, political, and economic contexts of the Standards become clear; they help us see why the Procrustean bed was constructed in the first place. Kairos also allows teaching librarians to conceptualize their own classrooms as produced in part by the Standards—they gave us a platform from which to lay claim to institutional resources—but not necessarily as spaces in which teaching and learning must be governed by those same Standards. Drawing on the theory and practice of the present from the time of the ancients to contemporary composition studies, teaching librarians can use kairos to reorient instruction away from universalizing standards and frameworks, inescapably reflective and productive of ideology, and toward the particular needs of a particular group of students at a particular time. A heuristic of kairos productively responds to the critiques leveled against standards-based education, enabling teaching librarians to orient teaching and learning to their particular situations, rather than a set of ideal outcomes promulgated far from the classroom.

CONCLUSION: THE KAIROS OF REVISION

The concept of kairos allows librarians an analytic alternative to grappling with the truth claims of competing frameworks of information literacy. It offers instead a heuristic of the present, focusing research and practice toward local contexts and away from global abstraction. Kairos allows librarians to understand their actions as embedded in local and global contexts, and always subject to reflection and revision.

Librarians developed the Standards as a measured intervention in a kairos that favored mechanistic, measurable learning outcomes tied to employment. Such intervention was critical from the perspective of institutional resources: the Standards enabled us to make claims for resources. This past produced our present, one that has only intensified the demand for outcomes-based instruction, positivist approaches to learning assessment, and ongoing struggles to maintain a librarian voice in broader conversations about the future of higher education. The articulation and deployment of the Standards also produced their own critique: a call for the profession to correct the Standards. The information literacy framework revision process can itself be understood kairotically, as a measured response to these various forces, produced in part by the interventions made by librarians in the past. Seen from the perspective of kairos, the revised framework will no more reveal the truth about what matters in terms of information and other literacies than did the Standards of 2000. Instead, the work of revision represents another intervention in time that will make possible whatever comes next.

A brief discussion of the kairos of the work toward a revised framework reminds us that revision itself is not necessary, but is a kairotic response, in part to the critiques produced by the 2000 Standards. The revision process began in 2011 when ACRL assembled a task force to determine whether or not the Standards, now a decade old, were due to be updated (Bell, 2013). The task force determined that they should be. A group of librarians and other stakeholders was assembled to carry out the revision process (Bell, 2013). Representatives included Troy Swanson, an early voice in the critical information literacy discourse (2004a; 2004b; 2006), and the early recommendations of the Task Force acknowledge critiques by Elmborg and others that the Standards disempower students: recommendations include the need to “address the role of the student as content creator” as well as “content curator,” not simply as consumers of

information (ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards Review Task Force, 2013). The kairos of the revision has demanded that discursive critiques be addressed, and they have been.

One might argue, then, that the revisions will represent a significant improvement over the first set of Standards, revealing objectives and outcomes that account for the problems pointed to by critics. From the perspective of kairos, however, the revisions simply represent an intervention into the present tense of library instruction, offering changes that address the changing conditions under which academic librarians work while leaving the demand for a set of standards fundamentally intact while generating new critiques, some of which have already been made (Schroeder, 2013). Indeed, in their focus on re-visioning and re-defining the Standards, the Task Force reinscribes the importance of Standards and for organizing teaching and learning in libraries, affirming the fantastic possibility—from the standpoint of the kairotic librarian—of getting the Standards right.

The stakes in the revision process need not be a struggle over what is true or right, whether information literacy or metaliteracy or threshold concepts best captures what it is we want students to know. Understood kairotically, the revised framework will comprise the basis for making institutional claims—we will need to provide different kinds of evidence in order to demonstrate our effectiveness, tied to whatever outcomes are finally decided by the body that governs standards documents in the profession. It will not, however, constitute a discovered truth. Teaching librarians who understand standards of all kinds as kairotic texts inextricable from their contexts can approach standards as functional, producing the classrooms and teaching labs that we call our own, while not dictating what we do inside them.

As the revision process concludes, the articulation of kairos as a heuristic that acknowledges the material value of Standards—productive of an institutional role for teaching

librarians and resources to support them—while making space for a teaching practice that focuses on the particular contexts of the teaching and learning moment can be useful. Such a heuristic can prevent the siphoning of energy away from the critical work of teaching students in our classrooms in favor of buttressing external and abstract Standards that are necessary but too often distracting.

In its emphasis on time and timeliness, *kairos* refocuses pedagogical attention on the teaching situation rather than the externally-defined standards that produce the pedagogical situation in the first place. Such a refocusing returns the librarian's gaze to its right place: the teaching situation in front of her, one which requires present-tense investigation and reflection to get locally right, rather than the constant measuring against whatever Procrustean bed is promulgated by professional organizations whose concerns rightly and necessarily include both student learning and the establishment of a place at the table of discourse about revolution and reform in higher education.

Recognizing the historicity of information literacy itself enables a critique that offers a way out of the usual opposition to the Standards that are commonly offered in the literature. *Kairos* allows for a paradigmatic shift away from external learning standards and toward the classroom. Information literacy no longer need stand as the *truth* of what students need to do, learn, and be, but can instead be viewed from a critical distance as a product of its time, doing the work of intervening in higher education on behalf of librarians as workers in that economy, producing a classroom that is itself a context for all kinds of teaching and learning that may or may not be encompassed by or relevant to the Standards. In other words, *kairos* can be deployed as an analytic spur to the development of pedagogies that take the information literacy classroom

and transform it into a space for teaching and learning that centers the present tense rather than Standards that, in their deployment, mask and erase their own dependency on time itself.

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